

Message Text

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7061

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INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY APRIS

C O N F I D E N T I A L ROME 6342

FROM AMBASSADOR LODGE'S OFFICE

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, VT, EG

SUBJECT: SADAT VISIT TO VATICAN

1. PRESIDENT SADAT, DURING HIS EUROPEAN TRIP, HAD PRIVATE AUDIENCE WITH POPE PAUL VI ON APRIL 8. VATICAN MADE EXTRAORDINARY EFFORT IN WELCOMING PRESIDENT SADAT. IN AN UNUSUAL PRACTICE, VATICAN NEWSPAPER "L'OSSERVATORE ROMANO" ON EVE OF VISIT CARRIED SPECIAL GREETINGS, NOTING THAT THIS WAS FIRST VISIT OF AN EGYPTIAN HEAD OF STATE TO VATICAN, AND CHARACTERIZING SADAT AS AN ILLUSTRIOUS STATESMAN OF INTERNATIONAL PRESTIGE AND APPLAUDING HIS EFFORTS IN "SEARCHING ON THE BASIS OF REALISTIC PREMISES, AN EQUITABLE SETTLEMENT OF THE 30-YEAR-OLD MIDDLE EAST CONFLICT."

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2. THE POPE AND SADAT, IN A 45-MINUTE PRIVATE AUDIENCE, DISCUSSED THE FOLLOWING SUBJECTS: MOSLEM-CHRISTIAN DIALOGUE, PEACE IN MIDDLE EAST, QUESTION OF JERUSALEM AND HOLY PLACES, AND SITUATION IN LEBANON.

3. IN HIS PUBLIC REMARKS, THE POPE EXPRESSED:

- GREAT DESIRE FOR CONTINUATION OF MOSLEM-CHRISTIAN DIALOGUE;
- ENCOURAGEMENT TO SADAT TO CONTINUE SEEKING PEACEFUL AND JUST SOLUTION TO ARAB-ISRAELI CRISIS, WHICH "MUST INCLUDE AN EQUITABLE SOLUTION ALSO TO PROBLEM OF PALESTINIAN PEOPLE, FOR WHOSE DIGNITY AND RIGHTS WE HAVE REPEATEDLY EXPRESSED HUMANITARIAN AND FRIENDLY INTERESTS";
- HOPE FOR RESOLUTION OF QUESTION OF JERUSALEM AND HOLY PLACES "WITH DUE REGARD FOR MILLIONS OF FOLLOWERS OF THREE GREAT MONOTHEISTIC RELIGIONS";
- RESTATED ANGUISH AND PREOCCUPATIONS FOR "DESTINY OF LEBANON," SAYING THAT "THIS CONFLICT ALSO FINDS ITS TRAGIC PLACE WITHIN FRAMEWORK OF PROBLEM OF PEACE IN MIDDLE EAST" AND THAT, IN ADDITION TO DEPLORABLE DESTRUCTION OF HUMAN LIFE, "THIS CIVIL WAR DOES INCALCULABLE HARM TO FRATERNAL COEXISTENCE, AND CAN HAVE VERY SAD EFFECTS ON MOSLEM-CHRISTIAN RELATIONS IN ENTIRE REGION."

4. SADAT, IN HIS PUBLIC REMARKS, PRAISED POPE'S ROLE FOR PEACE, FREEDOM AND JUSTICE IN WORLD AND PARTICULARLY POPE'S STANDS AGAINST "OUTRAGE TO HUMAN DIGNITY" AND AGGRESSION AGAINST WOMEN AND CHILDREN. SADAT ALSO COMMENDED POPE'S REFUSAL TO "ADMIT ANY CHANGE FOR HOLY CITY OF JERUSALEM". ALTHOUGH SADAT DID NOT REVEAL MUCH IN HIS PUBLIC STATEMENT, WE HAVE LEARNED THAT, IN ADDITION TO INVITING POPE TO VISIT CAIRO, HE ENCOURAGED VATICAN TO:

- BECOME MORE ACTIVE IN RESOLVING LEBANON CRISIS;
- STATE MORE CLEARLY VATICAN'S POSITION ON JERUSALEM AND HOLY PLACES;
- EXPECT EGYPTIAN SUPPORT IN INTENSIFIED MOSLEM-CHRISTIAN DIALOGUE.

5. WITH RESPECT TO JERUSALEM, WE UNDERSTAND THAT SADAT WOULD AGREE TO SUPPORT INTERNATIONAL STATUS, BUT ONLY FOR WHOLE CITY AND NOT JUST ARAB JERUSALEM, HOWEVER, IF ISRAEL WOULD

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NOT AGREE TO SUCH A PROPOSAL, EGYPTIANS FEEL THAT ARAB JERUSALEM WOULD BECOME CAPITAL OF NEW PALESTINIAN STATE. IN THIS EVENTUALITY, STATUS OF HOLY SITES WOULD HAVE TO BE NEGOTIATED IN NEW CONTEXT, BUT EGYPT DID NOT FORESEE PROBLEMS IN THIS.

6. WE ALSO UNDERSTAND THAT VATICAN DID NOT APPROVE SADAT'S ALL-ARAB INTERVENTION FOR LEBANON DESPITE ITS WISH TO ENLARGE

COMMUNITY OF THOSE CONCERNED WITH RESOLVING LEBANESE PROBLEM.

7. IT IS NOTEWORTHY THAT SADAT'S PUBLIC STATEMENT DID NOT
MENTION ISRAEL DIRECTLY. THIS PROBABLY REFLECTS CONTINUING
EGYPTIAN SEARCH FOR NEGOTIATING SOLUTION MIDDLE EAST CONFLICT
AND ALSO SADAT'S SENSITIVITY NOT TO CREATE PROBLEMS FOR
HOLY SEE WITH ISRAEL THROUGH PUBLIC DECLARATIONS. VOLPE

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